

Table 4-1. Assumptions used in preparing analyses of environmental consequences of visitor activities in Denali National Park and Preserve

TOPIC	ASSUMPTIONS
Overnight Camping	<p>Use levels will grow gradually in park additions and preserve, concentrating in areas that are relatively easy to reach by air, ground, or water.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although no data is systematically collected from people camping in the park additions or preserve because registration is not required, there are indirect sources of data. For example, concessions reports from 1999 to 2001 show the number of overnight campers dropped off by air taxis in the Ruth Amphitheater rose from 196 to 331, an increase of 69% in just two years. On the Pika Glacier, the number of overnight campers dropped off by air taxis went from 39 to 112 over the same time period, an increase of 187% (NPS 2001 unpublished concessions data) Implementation of the South Denali Development Concept Plan (DCP) will provide additional access to the park backcountry on the south side of the range in the Tokositna area.
Airplane Landings General & Non-Commercial	<p>There is a possibility that landing areas in the Old Park will become known as destinations for private pilots, leading to conflicts with other users and changing the experience in the Old Park, contrary to planning direction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This kind of use occurs minimally; but as has been demonstrated with snowmobiles on the south side of the park, new uses can grow rapidly.
Aircraft Overflights	<p>Aircraft overflights, particularly scenic air tours, will continue to grow rapidly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are 36+ companies in Girdwood and Anchorage advertising scenic flights to Denali. The bulk of use still comes from Talkeetna and the park entrance area, but as these other companies promote their services and find clients such as those who want a specialty tour like the Lear jet (see chapter 3) or those whose itinerary only brings them as close as Anchorage or Fairbanks these operations may expand. Tours from Talkeetna will continue to increase. Traffic has expanded with the opening of two major hotels, offering a total of more than 400 rooms and catering to package tour travelers. Typically the tours offer flightseeing as an optional activity for their guests. The amount of lodging and package tour traffic continues to expand in the Denali entrance area. The Healy airstrip could support additional commercial use that would likely impact the relatively untouched northern additions near and west of the Stampede corridor.
Snowmobile Use	<p>Throughout park additions, snowmobile use will expand into more remote areas of the park and preserve and occur at higher levels. Accessible terrain from the Parks Highway and Petersville Road, as well as the Tokositna and Yentna Rivers, will be in high demand and could become crowded. Advances in technology will allow riders to travel farther and faster.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of registered snowmobiles in Alaska has been increasing steadily, with more riders traveling to the Denali region for winter recreation. Improvements to snowmobiles in the last 10 years have already allowed the machines to travel places in the park that would have been impossible in the 1970s or 1980s. Manufacturers continue to invest in technology improvements.
Motorboats	<p>It is possible that motorboats will begin traveling upstream into the Old Park and become the only motorized use in an otherwise non-motorized area. Motorboat operators are another group of users that may adopt the park as a destination.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This kind of use occurs minimally, but as has been demonstrated with snowmobiles on the south side of the park, new uses can grow rapidly.
Hiking, Backpacking	<p>In time, use levels will increase in park additions leading to visitor conflicts, degraded experience, and resource impacts (social trails, campsites). Use will concentrate at access points and at popular destinations, including additional dayhiking in the Old Park</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no data on this issue besides that noted above at Overnight Camping.
Climbing and Mountaineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of climbers will continue to increase at existing destinations particularly Mt. McKinley and will expand to new areas as popular destinations are seen as crowded or overused. 2001 was the busiest season ever on Mt. McKinley and Mt. Foraker with 1,305 registered climbers attempting McKinley and 40 on Foraker. This compares to just 935 on McKinley 10 years earlier in 1991 and 612 in 1981. The number of climbers annually is unevenly edging up at an average rate of 3% per year over the last 20 years, raising capacity issues particularly because of the short climbing season and the popularity of a single route the West Buttress for most McKinley climbs. As the most popular climbing destinations are seen as crowded or overused, use is beginning to disperse to other locations. Note the statistics under Overnight Camping listed above.
Non-Motorized Winter Activities	<p>Use levels will remain relatively low. Incremental, unplanned changes to accommodate other users (snowmobilers, automobile tourists) would diminish future opportunities for non-motorized winter activities.</p>

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Bicycle Use	<p>Possibly, the Denali backcountry will become a destination for a rapidly growing off-road cycling community. Bicycles could have significant impacts on the tundra since there are no trails to accommodate bicycling.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This kind of use occurs minimally at Denali, but as has been demonstrated with snowmobiles on the south side of the park, new uses can grow rapidly.
Pack Animals	<p>It is possible that the Denali backcountry will become a destination for people traveling with use of pack animals. Horses, llamas, or other livestock could have significant impacts on the tundra since there are no trails to accommodate pack animals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This kind of use occurs minimally, but as has been demonstrated with snowmobiles on the south side of the park, new uses can grow rapidly.
Guided and Commercial Uses	<p>Demand by business to provide additional commercial activities in the park will continue to increase. Not all commercial services will be compatible with park purposes because of the type or level of service proposed.</p>
Commercial Aircraft Landings	<p>Glacier landings by commercial scenic tours and air taxis will continue to increase. Commercial operators will find and use landing areas in additional locations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scenic tour flights with glacier landings increased 37% from 1999 to 2001. Air taxi flights increased 15% in the same time period. All but one of the companies that are permitted to make glacier landings are based in Talkeetna, a town that is growing as a visitor destination (see Aircraft Overflights section above). Landings on the Pika Glacier jumped from 39 in 1999 to 244 in 2001, a more than five-fold increase, demonstrating the ability of operators to quickly expand use into new areas.
Guided Hiking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guided hiking by existing concessions permittees and non-profit NPS partners will continue to grow, particularly once the Denali Science and Learning Center begins offering programs.
Adjacent Public Lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to and use of public lands near or adjacent to Denali will continue to improve and grow. Many of the activities that presently take place in Denali can also be enjoyed on these nearby public lands.

airstrip, and along the Denali Highway and Nenana River west of the park. The Denali Borough has not developed a management plan for its lands, but privatization and development of some borough lands is expected.

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has a land disposal program designed to transfer settlement and recreational land to the public. The DNR has identified about 5,000 such parcels throughout Alaska. Several areas are identified by the Susitna Area Plan for disposal, including lands at Schneider Lake, Kroto Creek, Tokosha, Gate Creek, and Amber Lake. Any land disposal in the area would be set back from the Petersville Road to protect scenic qualities. DNR offered remote recreational cabin sites for lease and sale in the Denali Borough northeast of the park boundary in 2001 and 2002. Finally, numerous mining claims filed on state selections along the Petersville Road would become valid upon land conveyance from the federal government.

National Park Facilities and Management Actions

The National Park Service will implement development plans as described in the 1997 *Entrance Area and Road Corridor DCP* and the 1997 *South Denali DCP*. New facilities will include a visitor center and learning center at the park entrance; a nature center in the Tokositna area of Denali State Park; a visitor center near the Parks Highway in Denali State Park; several trails along the park road, near the nature center, and at Chelatna Lake; and public use cabins and a campground near the Tokositna nature center site. The location for the Tokositna-area nature center may be relocated into the Peters Hills outside of the Denali State Park boundary as recommended by the South Denali Citizen's Consultation Committee.

In 2000, the National Park Service established a regulation that closed the area of the former Mount McKinley National Park (Old Park) to snowmobile use and promulgated a definition for the ANILCA term "traditional activities" that applied only to the area covered by the regulation.

The National Park Service converted the Incidental Business Permits for aircraft landings to concessions permits in October 1997. This transition had the effect of limiting the number of air service companies that are able to land on the glaciers on the south side of the Alaska Range.